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Campus Commentary

VOLUME 3

FEBRUARY, 1954

No. 3

Dear Brother:

If the unsung heroines of the typewriter and the mailing machine hold out, it is possible that you will receive these random notes shortly before Ash Wednesday. By the way, if you have any of these secretaries, typists, mimeograph girls, or other functionaries assisting you in the work of your congregation, have you ever stopped to say a word of gratitude to these noble slaves of the machine age? A few weeks ago a brother told me he takes time out from his other duties twice a year to write a personal note of gratitude to the people in his congregation who work but who have never stood in front and held major offices—the quiet secretaries, the sexton with the creaky shoes, the chairman of the house committee of the Ladies Aid — the silent ones — the ones who do the work of Martha with the devotion of Mary. I am sure that a little note to them from their pastor once or twice a year will do much to encourage them in their work for the Kingdom.

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Once more Lent comes over the horizon. As I have often said, this is the season of the year in which the Lutheran Church is at its best. Perhaps there are times when some of us have our doubts about the quality of some of the preaching from our pulpits. Not a few of us have too much Reformed literature on our shelves . . . nor do we always have the time to separate the wheat from the chaff. The temptation to follow the shouting fundamentalist in Alabama who has three thousand people in church on Sunday evening is great and ultimately tragic. During Lent, however, I feel that our preaching reaches its highest level of excellence. With our training and heritage we can hardly go wrong. In all these years of wandering around the Synod I do not ever remember hearing a Lenten sermon which did not go to the heart of the matter and exalt the Cross, the Redeemer and the Atonement. It is true, of course, that some have been better than others, just as the testimony of the dying thief was better than Peter's tears on Maundy Thursday. But they were all good. The brethren knew what they were saying, they had been on the hill themselves and from their personal experience of the Cross and their study of the Holy Scriptures came the rich, full, warm story of the pity and forgiveness of Good Friday.

For many of us, I suspect, Lent is very much like Christmas. It is a time for the backward look and the crowding memories. For me it is strange to recall that the Lenten services which I remember most clearly are the ones in the old box-like church in New York City and at Bronxville in the bare, old "Aula". Our good friend "Pop" Siener was probably preaching better sermons than we Quartaners would ever appreciate. Curiously, my memories of Lenten services in St. Louis are not very strong and vivid. An occasional sermon by the sainted "Bucky" seems to linger in my memory. It is probable that C. C. Schmidt was too much for us at that stage of our theological and spiritual development. I have read some of his sermons since then, and they are of a very high order.

My most vivid memories, however, are of the early spring evenings of Lent at Springfield. I lived about a mile from downtown and old Trinity. Usually I would walk to town about six o'clock as dusk was falling and the first signs of spring were all around me. I would eat my fish or hamburger in the "Greasy Spoon" in the alley off Sixth Street and then wander four blocks across the Alton tracks to Trinity. In those days Mr. F. C. Diesing was usually at the organ. He was one of the earliest to know what to do with such chorales as "O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden" or "Herzliebster Jesu Was Hast Du Verbrochen." The preacher was almost always the sainted Paul Schulz, a curious figure in the pulpit. My brethren who are graduates from Springfield in those years will remember that outwardly he was a cold, austere Prussian. We called him "Pope" and he knew it. Just underneath, however, I often found an amazing warmth and a vein of poetry which one would never expect. I remember hearing a Lenten sermon from him one night which was mysteriously eloquent and moving, especially during the last five minutes. I was so interested that I went to the sacristy and told him so. I asked him particularly what the reason for the strange power of the last few minutes was. Somewhat shamefacedly he answered, "I wrote the last five paragraphs in blank verse." He had a remarkable eye and ear for the telling word and the noble phrase.

So there we were every Wednesday evening in our accustomed seats. "Pop" Klein and "Pat" Wessel were normally far down front. Scattered through the audience were Engelder, Wenger, Mayer,

Behrens and Coyner. As the youngest and the least my own seat was in the third row from the back under the balcony — usually with students around me. For a moment last night I closed my eyes to think about these men who are now all over the world and in heaven. Suddenly the Lenten seasons of more than twenty years ago came back to me with an urgency and poignancy which I shall never forget. So many of my friends of those days are with God now — Klein, Behrens, Wessel, Engelder — and I must confess that I am a little homesick for them and Springfield and the distant years this late winter night. So many things have changed and passed away. My only comfort this Lenten season of 1954 is that though the voices are gone the message still lives. It will remain until, I am very sure, there will be only one Voice in all the universe, speaking, as once we stammered, of judgment and mercy to all the children of men.

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Campus notes: I am happy to tell you that we have received more names of prospective students from our pastors and teachers this year than ever before. In fact, I have been informed that at this date more names are on our lists than we had during the entire preceding year. I am sure that you will understand the importance of this fact. Not only does it give us an opportunity to tell the story of Christian higher education to a larger and more representative group, but it also enables us to become increasingly selective in choosing our students for admission. I am most grateful to the brethren who have made this possible for us.

At the present writing it is still too early to have any definite information on the results of our Valparaiso offering on the last Sunday in January. Preliminary reports and a few parish papers sent in from here and there indicate that it may be very successful. I have often wondered if some of our brethren realize that for a body of the size and strength of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod the support of a University should be a comparatively simple matter. A general offering with sufficient publicity behind it once a year would take care of a good part of our current operations. It is still our hope that this single effort each year, together with our Patron Plan, will become the basic foundation on which the University will be built.

Which reminds me of another matter: I wonder if any of you have ever made a study of the reading habits of our Lutheran people, particularly with respect to our church papers. All our ecclesiastical journals seem to have a larger circulation than ever before. On the other hand, I occasionally harbor the dark suspicion that they are read less than ever before. For example, we have approximately 250,000 people on the mailing list for the Valparaiso University Bulletin. One would think that even a fairly high percentage of readership would spread information about Valpo and its purposes which would eliminate many misunderstandings. Yet, again and again, I run head on into the most astonishing misconceptions of our work and our place in the life of the church. There are still many people who feel that we are another seminary. Others know positively that we prepare only ministers for Springfield and St. Louis. During the past few months I have received dozens of inquiries concerning that fact that The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is apparently planting a rival university in Fort Wayne about a hundred miles from our campus. One has to say over and over again that the proposed Synodical Senior College is definitely a pre-professional school and that the two institutions — our Lutheran University and the Senior College — can only be of mutual help to each other in the years to come. I have often wondered just where these misunderstandings arise. At times they seem to be almost willful.

Which reminds me of still another thing. If one runs down the list of the Ten Commandments and appraises their status and power in the modern church, I am wondering if we would not have to agree that within the walls of the Kingdom the Eighth Commandment is the one which is most frequently broken. There are days when I live in a constant state of bewilderment over the brazen, godless and evil way in which supposedly Christian men and women gossip and slander and lie. I am certain that there must be a special punishment for men and women who carelessly commit murder with their tongues. Sometimes, of course, it is not quite as bad as that but merely annoying. For example, some of the brethren have heard me tell the story of the letter from the good brother in Milwaukee several years ago who inquired about the "appearance of a Rabbi at one of our chapel services." He felt that having rabbis speak to us in chapel was bad and that he could no longer support the University. I wrote him immediately that nothing like that ever happened but that I was very much interested in the psychological and spiritual process by which a story like that could have been spread in his city. We cooperated on the project and finally discovered that several months earlier we had had a noted musicologist at one of our convocations in honor of Johann Sebastian Bach. This was no chapel. The musicologist happened to be a good German scholar with a somewhat Hebraic sounding name. He delivered one of the finest addresses on the significance of the Leipzig Kantor that I have ever heard. That was all there was to it. By the time, however, that the story reached Milwaukee our German musicologist lecturing on Bach had become a Rabbi preaching in chapel. And so it goes . . .

I wonder if all of us should not look at this problem a little more closely. What actually happens when I repeat a bit of careless gossip, especially about a brother in the ministry? Even if the bit of information I have is true (which it usually is not), I still have done nothing except to make him more unhappy and to harm his work. No good can possibly come of it. It seems to me that there are so many things in the world we must be *against* that there is no time and room for us to be *against* one another.

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This is the season of the year when I occasionally see the programs for pastoral conferences for the coming season. I was particularly interested in the report of the program for the Concordia College Pastoral Conference at Milwaukee which appeared in the BADGER LUTHERAN some time ago. According to the news report our Missouri Synod pastors in the Milwaukee area meet on the first Monday of every month from September until June in the Library Building of Concordia College. The program as outlined by Dr. Walter Jennrich will revolve about practical problems which face the Church in such a community as Milwaukee. Some of the topics will be Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage, Church Publicity, Church Discipline, Lodges and Burials. These subjects will be treated systematically from three aspects: pertinent Scripture passages, confessional writings, and the principles which apply. The purpose of the discussions is to achieve greater consistency and unity in our Lutheran practice in these areas of the life and work of the Church. An excellent approach to a problem that needs serious attention.

* * *

During the current year all the journals of Protestantism are filled with articles concerning the forthcoming assembly of the World Council of Churches at Evanston, Illinois, in August. I must confess to a curious sense of disappointment as I page through the hundreds of essays which have already been written on the assembly and its theme "Christ, the Hope of the World." It is encouraging to note, of course, that the Protestant liberal idea of a continuing evolutionary progress toward a not too far distant Utopia is dead as a doornail. There is a much more Christian note in the approach to the theme of the assembly. It is also true that many of the articles strike a ringing eschatological tone. This is all to the good. A forgetful generation must be reminded again and again that the world is as grass and that we have here no continuing city.

On the other hand, many of the articles are either wrong or shallow. Only now and then does one find paragraphs which ring the changes on the great fundamental truths of Scriptural Christianity. Take, for example, the following paragraphs from the essay of Professor Edmund Schlink of the University of Heidelberg in the January issue of *The Ecumenical Review*.

"We all take as our starting-point the fact of the Incarnate Son of God, Who took upon Himself the sins of the world and died for the world upon the Cross. He died not only for the sinners of His time, but for all men in all times, whether they sinned before His coming or after His coming. He bore upon the Cross the sins with which we Christians dishonour His Name. Suffering the death of a criminal, He brought to us all the justice of God. Enduring the anguish of being cut off from God by impugment and death, He opened to us all free access to God. And that death on the Cross was revealed by God as the victory of the Cross, in the awakening of Jesus from the dead.

"If Jesus broke the spell of estrangement from God He likewise broke the spell of estrangement among men. By His Cross and Resurrection He brought the peace of God, and established peace between Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian. Thus it is on Him that the One People of God is grounded. No division of Christendom can take away the oneness of the Church, since the Church is the One Body of the One Lord, the One Temple of the One Spirit, the One People of the One God."

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Here at Valpo, as on almost every other American campus, the continuing battle over the meaning and purpose of education goes on and on. With us here it is not so much a battle as an attempt to maintain certain fixed ideals and objectives in the face of a wave of barbarism which threatens to engulf us. It is true, of course, that in many of the discussions there is the traditional "sound and fury, signifying nothing." On the other hand, many of the arguments are very real and very important. Of late we have again been considering the constant tension between the emphasis on the traditional liberal arts and the steady undertow toward the immediately vocational and professional courses. We view with misgiving the emphasis of parents on college work which can immediately be translated "into making a living." This is, of course, important, but it certainly is not all of education. It is astonishing to see how many leading businessmen and industrialists today prefer a soundly educated man or woman —

one who can read and write and speak with intelligence and clarity — rather than the person who has specialized early in his college career.

Of course, there are also other problems. At times I succumb to a feeling of dismay over the shoddiness, softness and sentimentality which has crept into our educational system. We coddle the young idea more than any other generation before us. Perhaps this is largely due to the "bleeding hearts" and "do-gooders" who have been the leaders in the left wing of progressive education. According to these displaced persons from a mental hospital the child or the student can do no wrong; everything that is not according to Hoyle must be charged to glands and heredity and there must be no punishment for misdeeds. Like a breath of fresh air comes the following paragraph in an article some time ago by Daniel Brady:

"Heretical as it may seem, I am of the opinion that in the classroom the students are entitled to justice but not to mercy. A standard must be set and maintained, and no exceptions must be made to that standard whether a boy is a good athlete, or works after school or is involved in extra-curricular activities. Any sign of favoritism or a lowering of the standard creates an unhealthy atmosphere which darkens the light of knowledge. Once this reign of pure justice is established, you will notice that the students will toe the mark and if, perchance, they fail, they will admit they had it coming to them. Far from creating a reign of terror, as some may think, this policy will unite the class in a common bond of democracy whereby each one is judged and rewarded according to his work."

"Of the above observations I am convinced — from my experience as a teacher but, more particularly, as a student. It is my candid opinion that our students are capable of much better work, but they must be driven to it. In the majority of cases, contrary to some of the so-called progressive ideas about education, constant pressure must be exerted, even if the pressure takes the form of dismissal from the school for failure in his course of studies."

On our own campus, of course, we are hard at work in an effort to make education thoroughly Christian. This means that there must be a relationship between student and teacher which is based on Christian principles. Since the principles which must be applied are varied and complex, the task of building a thoroughly Christian and Lutheran philosophy is not easy. Included in our approach must be the essence of the Fourth Commandment, the principle of love, the principle of freedom and justice, and the principle of perfection. All of these in proper measure and with divine guidance produce a philosophy of education which is deeply and thoroughly Christian in the highest sense of the word.

* * *

To return to Lent for a moment: A few weeks ago, in a wise, old book about Gethsemane, the author pointed out that we must again learn the vital distinction between *discens divina* and *patiens divina* — between merely learning about God and learning God. He pointed out that, unlike the sleeping disciples, we know today exactly what was happening in the garden; but we shall go on sleeping in our own dark and little gardens unless our knowledge of the facts of our Lord's suffering is transformed into an experiencing of the facts. Only when we suffer with Him because of our sins do the facts mean something to us. Our Lord said to His disciples, "Watch and pray." The two words are important. Watch! Be aware of what is going on in Gethsemane and Calvary, not with a cold, scientific appraisal, but with your heart, *patiens divina*. Pray! For out of this learning of God comes inevitably a living with God, an understanding of His redemptive work. As we learn we pray, and as we pray we learn. This is our great task and opportunity also in Lent in the year of our Lord 1954.

My good wishes for power and joy in all your work.

Very sincerely yours,

O. P. Kretzmann

President